

protective filters being provided with a light permeable window,

the method comprising the steps of:

mounting the protective filter on each end of the barrel, respectively;

supplying the barrel with an inert gas from a gas source;

removing a contaminating material attached to the surface of each of the optical elements  
by using light irradiation;

discharging the inert gas supplied in the barrel together with the contaminating material  
removed from the surface of each of the optical elements; and

storing the optical device in a state in which the barrel is filled with the inert gas supplied  
from the gas source.

Add the following new claims 76-81:

76. (Added) The method of storing as claimed in claim 50, wherein the barrel is  
detachably provided with the light permeable window at each of its end.

77. (Added) The method of storing as claimed in claim 76, wherein the light permeable  
window comprises a flat plate like optical element.

78. (Added) The method of storing as claimed in claim 50, wherein the inert gas from  
the gas source is further supplied in a space between the optical elements disposed adjacent to the

end of the barrel and the light permeable window.

79. (Added) The method of storing as claimed in claim 78, wherein the light irradiation is carried out in a state in which the inert gas from the gas source is supplied in the barrel, while the inert gas in the barrel is discharged from the barrel.

80. (Added) The method of storing as claimed in claim 50, wherein the contaminating material removed from the surface of each of the optical elements is discharged from the barrel in a state in which the contaminating material is suspended or afloat in the barrel.

81. (Added) The method of storing as claimed in claim 80, wherein the inert gas from the gas source is supplied in the barrel to a predetermined level of pressure after the contaminating material is discharged from the barrel.